United Nations A/C.3/65/SR.16

General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
18 January 2011

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 15 October 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mrs. Plodet (Vice-Chair) ..... (Austria)
Later: Mr. Tommo Monthe ..... (Cameroon)

Contents

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

10-58526C (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Mrs. Ploder (Austria), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of the child (*continued*) (A/65/336)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights children (*continued*) (A/65/41, A/65/206, A/65/219, A/65/221 and A/65/262)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/65/226)

1. **Ms. Gicheru** (Kenya) pointed out that, since the special session of the General Assembly on children in 2002, her country had achieved some progress in the areas of education and of combating HIV/AIDS, but that there was much still to be done to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Kenya, which was celebrating the forty-seventh anniversary of its independence, had always acknowledged that its future depended on the well-being of its children, who made up 65 per cent of its population. Kenya maintained its resolve, as expressed on its accession to independence, to eradicate illiteracy, poverty and diseases.

2. Since the adoption by the General Assembly of the outcome document of its twenty-seventh special session on children, entitled "A world fit for children", Kenya had undertaken several legislative and political reforms aiming to guarantee respect for the rights of children in the four priority areas for action identified at that session. The budget of the Ministry of Health had more than doubled over the past eight years, allowing the expansion of vaccination programmes, provision of medical care for pregnant women and children under the age of five, administering of treatment for malaria and tuberculosis and the distribution of anti-retroviral medication and vitamin A supplements, all free of charge. The country had launched the "Malezi Bora" initiative, with a view to promoting the health of women and children and mobilising communities for the eradication of malnutrition.

3. However, it was in the field of education that Kenya had achieved the most progress. The country had devoted a third of its budget to it over the past seven years. Primary and secondary education were currently provided free of charge and mobile schools had been set up for children in rural areas. However, several problems continued to stand in the way of attainment of some development goals — for example, the high infant mortality rates. In that connection, it was crucial to ensure that children were in a safe environment that protected them from violence. That objective required concerted efforts on the part of Governments and the international community.

4. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that poverty, inequalities and social exclusion hindered the physical and mental development of boys and girls and deprived them of the exercise of their fundamental rights. Studies had shown that poor children, who were generally undernourished, were at a disadvantage regarding access to education, arts and culture. The capitalist model exacerbated poverty, disease and hunger and ruined the hopes of millions of children and young people of leading a fulfilled life. It was crucial to change that situation, as the future of the human race was at stake.

5. The Venezuelan State guaranteed respect for the fundamental rights of children and young people. A law passed in 2000 and revised in 2007 incorporated into domestic law the principles contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Based on the principles of equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and inclusion, it guaranteed the fundamental rights of children and young people of both sexes, whether or not they were of Venezuelan nationality. A national council for the rights of children and young people had been set up and social protection committees helped to formulate, implement and monitor the management of public funds allocated to that sector. Programmes were also being implemented to support vulnerable children or those with disabilities, while innovative educational programmes promoted social justice and equality. In that framework, children received food and preventive care free of charge, and efforts were made in conjunction with their families to promote science, art and sport. Consequently, school results had improved considerably. The 2007-2013 economic and social development plan provided the framework for the State's policies on behalf of children; it was consistent with the strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, of which child protection was an integral part.

6. **Mr. Hilmi** (Iraq) said that the protection of human rights in general, and of children's rights in particular, was the responsibility of the Government. The statistics concerning children in Iraq – a country burdened with a sombre legacy of dictatorship, war, terrorism and insecurity – were terrible, whether in terms of lagging behind in education and health, particularly infant mortality (41 deaths per 1,000 births between 2002 and 2006), or in terms of malnutrition. The poverty of families that were also suffering from the consequences of insecurity served only to exacerbate the situation. The poor security conditions made it difficult for children to attend school regularly. The situation had been improving gradually since 2007, and measures had been taken to develop psychological support programmes for children, particularly street children, child beggars, and children mutilated by anti-personnel mines or who had fallen victim to acts of terrorism.

7. In partnership with international organisations, the Government was striving to implement instruments for promoting and protecting the rights of children. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had set up a special directorate to ensure that children's rights were safeguarded during the difficult period the country was going through. The Ministry of Education was receiving support for the implementation of projects to promote a culture of non-violence and peace. It was also attempting to alleviate the consequences of insecurity in the country by making rehabilitation services available.

8. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) noted that the protection of children's rights remained a challenge for the international community, particularly for developing countries with high levels of stunted growth, maternal mortality and illiteracy and where poverty, diseases, especially HIV/AIDS , financial and food crises, conflicts, insecurity, natural disasters and violence were devastating families, and children in particular. Achieving the goals set out in the document entitled "A world fit for children" called for concerted action on the part of the international community. In that context, Algeria was a party to the main international instruments for the promotion of children's rights and would soon be submitting its third and fourth periodic reports on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government had passed several legislative provisions concerning more effective protection of the rights of children. In collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it had adopted a national strategy on the family and a plan for combating violence against children. Furthermore, the Algerian Nationality Code had been amended and now recognised transmission of Algerian nationality by the mother.

9. Algeria was combating child labour, exploitation of children for prostitution, all forms of trafficking and the use of information technology for the dissemination of pornographic material featuring children. The Criminal Code proscribed and punished child abandonment, sexual acts committed against a child, and exploitation of children for prostitution. With regard to health, infant mortality had declined from 34.7 per 1,000 in 2002 to 25.5 per 1,000 in 2009, and provision of medical care for children had been improved. As far as education was concerned, compulsory free schooling for children up to the age of 16 remained a national priority and the school enrolment rate had reached 97.96 per cent in 2010. That positive outcome had been achieved thanks to the Government's sustained efforts, along with measures taken with regard to transport, canteens and school textbooks, and the President's decision to increase the school solidarity grant by 50 per cent.

10. **Mr. Taihitu** (Indonesia) said he welcomed the fact that the Committee on the Rights of the Child was tackling the backlog of reports, hoping that a long-term solution would be found to that issue, and noted with appreciation the cooperation between the treaty bodies, particularly between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. He emphasised that the Millennium Development Goals were also an excellent vehicle for promoting children's rights, especially the goals relating to maternal health and the reduction of child mortality.

11. Aware of the importance of supporting families, which played an essential role in protecting children and were the bedrock of society, the Government, in order to guarantee the rights of children, had implemented measures focused on maternal and child health and on early childhood and had, in particular, established a health insurance programme for poor families. Moreover, a department had recently been set up to provide information on the protection of women and children victims of violence and the Government had adopted a national plan of action to prevent

violence against children. Measures had also been taken to implement a national plan to combat the worst forms of child labour and combat the exploitation of children, in particular by setting up a database to combat against trafficking in persons and by cooperation between police departments of member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or in the framework of the Bali Process. Furthermore, the Government was currently drafting, as a supplement to the child protection act, a law on criminal justice for minors that gave precedence to restorative justice.

12. Finally, he suggested strengthening cooperation between United Nations bodies and regional structures, including the ASEAN committee responsible for the advancement and protection of women's and children's rights.

13. **Mrs. Sabja Daza** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her country had made considerable progress with regard to protection of children's and young people's rights. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had incorporated into the national legal system and had supplemented it with implementing provisions. The legal framework comprised the new Constitution and the Children's Code, which protected all children without exception and guaranteed the principles of the child's best interests and of non-discrimination.

14. In 2006, the Bolivian Government had implemented a development plan which included a comprehensive and intersectoral section on children. Its chief objective was to speed up the reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates, particularly by tackling the problem of chronic undernourishment. It further established a stipend to improve access to health care for women and babies.

15. Access to education was hindered when children had to work because of the socio-economic situation of their parents. The authorities had therefore introduced an allowance to encourage children to continue their schooling. In a similar vein, the programme to eliminate illiteracy had produced good results.

16. **Ms. Flores** (Honduras) said that building a fairer world with greater solidarity depended upon women and children. She had a feeling of profound admiration for the women of her country, particularly the underprivileged among them. She expressed her compassion for the plight of pregnant women obliged either to have an abortion or to bear another child whom they might be unable to feed; rural women who sacrificed everything to make their way to a hospital, sometimes in vain; peasant women who worked hard to feed and educate a swarm of children; working women who were the sole breadwinners for their offspring; in short, all those women who refused to admit defeat, and who held onto the hope of a better future. As for the children, their future should not be undermined by their present limitations: the children of Honduras were entitled to the same dreams as others.

17. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen) considered that much remained to be done for children suffering from poverty, disease and war – scourges that were only exacerbated by crises (economic, financial, energy and food) and the problems posed by climate change.

18. At the legal level, Yemen had not only been one of the first States to adhere to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to its two optional protocols, as well as to other international instruments, but it had also adapted its legislation to enhance the protection of children and to honour its international commitments.

19. At the institutional level, it had set up several specialised bodies. Since the nineties, children had held an important place in many national development plans, as is confirmed, for example, by the adoption in July 2007 of the National Strategy for Children and Young People.

20. Despite its limited resources, Yemen had made progress in areas such as vaccination, social protection of poor children, and combating child labour and child trafficking. Convinced of the importance of offering young people the opportunity to express their concerns and their ideas, and to propose solutions to strengthen their rights, the Yemeni Government had supported the setting-up of a children's parliament.

21. The Yemeni delegation welcomed the support provided by its international partners, particularly UNICEF, to guarantee a better life for children, in Yemen and elsewhere. In conclusion, he deplored the fact that Palestinian children continued to live under Israeli occupation, enduring very harsh conditions and being deprived of their fundamental rights on a daily basis. He therefore invited the international community to face up to its responsibilities and to put an end to that situation so that all the children could live in peace.

22. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia), recalling that Colombia was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to its optional protocols, said that those instruments had been incorporated into the domestic legal system and served as a basis for her Government's public policies on child protection. In 2010, Colombia had submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child its first reports on implementation of the protocols to the Convention.

23. Although the 2010 report on the Millennium Development Goals revealed notable progress with regard to school enrolment in the poorest countries and a reduction in child mortality, the information it contained on malnutrition and maternal and child health was alarming. Moreover, in developing regions, children in rural areas were much more vulnerable than those in urban areas, while children living in extreme poverty also faced huge obstacles to the full exercise of their rights.

24. The Colombian Government was making progress in implementing the national policy for early childhood adopted by the National Economic and Social Policy Council in 2007. Colombia, which had made early childhood a public policy priority, intended to ensure the development of all children, from conception to six years of age. The number of Colombians benefiting from the programmes of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute had more than doubled between 2002 and 2010, as had that of the young children taken into care. In the framework of a strategy promoting the right to happiness, Colombia was trying to improve children's lives. Thanks to the "education revolution" policy of the Ministry of Education, the school enrolment ratio was currently 100 per cent at primary and secondary levels, and 75 per cent in the vocational field, with efforts being focused in particular on vulnerable population groups, especially indigenous peoples and those of African descent, persons with disabilities, and displaced persons and the poor, particularly in rural areas. With regard to child protection, a policy to prevent and combat commercial sexual exploitation of children had been implemented under the guidance of an inter-agency committee set up in 2009. A policy for prevention of the recruitment and use of children and young people in armed conflicts had also been implemented. The Government had thus ensured the protection of 4,200 children removed from illegal armed groups and had made progress in setting up a reparation programme for the victims of recruitment.

25. It was possible to give children a better life. Consequently, the United Nations should work for effective international cooperation in that area, so as to help States achieve the goals set by the General Assembly for the benefit of children.

26. **Mrs. Kolontai** (Belarus) said she deplored the fact that most of the ambitious goals that States had set themselves at the special session of the General Assembly on children had not yet been achieved. The economic and financial crisis, exacerbated by forced migrations, rapid urbanisation and climate change, had hampered attainment of development goals and, above all, had damaged children's interests.

27. Belarus was not content simply to support the efforts of the international community to guarantee the rights of children, but was making specific commitments to that effect. Thus, the fourth Presidential Programme entitled "Children of Belarus", currently in preparation for the period 2011- 2015, aimed to create the necessary conditions for children's physical, mental and moral development, and to prepare and adapt them for life in modern society. Achieving those social policy goals – a guarantee of children's rights and respect for their dignity – was an indispensable condition for sustainable development, both short- and long-term. Belarus, which had already achieved goals 1 and 2 of the Millennium Development Goals (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and achieve universal primary education), had established an efficient education system and guaranteed access to free public secondary education.

28. Aware of the importance of health – particularly in childhood and adolescence – for the well-being of a nation, Belarus welcomed the adoption of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health in 2010. With a mortality rate for children under the age of five reduced to 6.2 per 1,000 in 2009, Belarus was poised to achieve goal 4 of the Millennium Development Goals. To reach that stage, the country had rebuilt or upgraded maternity wards and hospitals and improved diagnosis of hereditary and congenital diseases. Moreover, vaccination, one of the most effective means of eradicating infectious childhood diseases, was accessible to all and free of charge. Belarus had invited the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to visit the country,

hoping that their cooperation would be fruitful and would contribute in particular to implementation of the recently adopted United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

29. Anxious to honour its international commitments, Belarus had submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child its periodic report on implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two optional protocols. It supported the initiatives taken in 2009, with the participation of young people, on the national, regional and international levels, and, at the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals held in 2010, had proposed setting up a global partnership for the defence of the interests of children and young people entitled "Help future generations prosper".

30. It was important for United Nations funds to be devoted to childhood issues and, in that connection, Belarus welcomed the fact that UNICEF was helping States to improve the living conditions of women and children, took an increasing interest in the vital issues of maternal and child nutrition, access to drinking water and sanitation, and was mobilising additional funds from donors. Belarus hoped that the representative of UNICEF would continue to pursue his activities in the country. In conclusion, he emphasised that, nowadays, matters of child development and education went beyond the framework of the family and called for concerted action of all Member States and the United Nations system.

31. **Ms. Bhorama** (Zimbabwe), while welcoming the progress made in promoting and protecting children's rights, said that many challenges remained to be overcome in that field, at both the national and the international levels. Consequently, the international community needed to enhance cooperation and scale up the implementation of effective measures to eliminate the root causes of violations of the rights of the child. The Government of Zimbabwe invited development partners to commit themselves further by providing developing countries with financial and technical assistance for creating a world fit for children.

32. On the domestic front, the Government of Zimbabwe had built up a legal framework for eradicating child trafficking and sexual violence against children. Furthermore, a national programme had been established to provide care for orphans and other vulnerable children. At the international level, Zimbabwe, which had already signed the main international and regional conventions, as well as sub-regional instruments in the field of children's rights, was considering ratification of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Aware that certain Zimbabwean traditions had had the effect of keeping children away from decision-making, the Government had supported the creation of various forums to involve children in national decisions that concerned them.

33. Moreover, taking into account the fact that maternal and child health in particular had fallen behind, the Zimbabwean Government was determined to strengthen its efforts to create a better world for children. Although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS had diminished considerably, it remained a major obstacle to child survival and development, and practical and financial support remained indispensable. In the field of education, Zimbabwe welcomed the fact that the primary school enrolment rate was currently 97 per cent and that gender parity had been attained, and was proud to have the highest literacy rate in Africa.

34. Zimbabwe requested the lifting of the economic sanctions that had been imposed upon the country for the past decade and that were an impediment to economic and social development.

35. **Mr. Tay** (Singapore) said that his country had built up a legislative and enforcement framework to ensure the furtherance of children's interests and well-being. Moreover, in 2010 Singapore would ratify the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and had already passed a law to incorporate that Convention into domestic law.

36. With regard to child health, Singapore was increasingly investing in preventive measures. The under-5 mortality rate had thus fallen from 31 per 1,000 in1960 to 2.2 per 1,000 in 2010, one of the six best rates in the world.

37. . The education system aimed to develop the talents of all children by offering them specialised curricula suited to the rhythm of each individual. The school dropout rate had fallen and the achievement level of pupils had risen, with the proportion of pupils reaching higher education having increased from

20 per cent in 1980 to 90 per cent in 2010. The Government did not plan to stop there and intended to improve the education system still further, adapting it to the twenty-first century world and, in particular, improving language-learning and -teaching. As Singapore was a multicultural, multiracial and multi-faith society, pupils learned to respect differences through daily recitation of the national pledge, which celebrated the country's unity in diversity, and by the annual commemoration of Racial Harmony Day. Moreover, on the occasion of the inaugural Youth Olympic Games organised in Singapore, the Government initiated a programme for racial and religious harmony to encourage young Singaporeans and athletes from all over the world to meet and exchange the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect.

38. **Mrs. Kavun** (Ukraine) said that the incorporation into domestic law of the provisions of the international instruments ratified by her country was continuing and that implementation of the national action plan for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was in progress.

39. Ukraine had implemented a number of measures for improving child health. Thanks in particular to the programmes promoting breast-feeding and to modernisation of perinatal techniques, infant mortality had dropped from 14.7 per 1,000 in 1995 to 9.4 per 1,000 in 2009. Besides that, in 2009, 98 per cent of children had undergone compulsory medical check-ups. The risk of vertical transmission of the HIV virus had dropped from 40 per cent in 2001 to 4.2 per cent in 2009. The Government was continuing to strengthen adoption procedures for orphans and children lacking parental care by giving precedence to placement in foster families or in family-type orphanages. Protection of the child against all forms of violence was guaranteed by the Ukrainian Constitution, while violence and exploitation were punishable by law. In 2010, the representative for protection of children's rights, equality and non-discrimination, who reported to the Office of the Ombudsman, began his work.

40. Her delegation greatly appreciated the existing cooperation between Ukraine and United Nations bodies, especially UNICEF, but also the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the international Labour Organization (ILO), for supporting and protecting children and mothers; it welcomed in particular the decision taken by the UNICEF Board of Directors to extend its cooperation programme by one year.

41. During its presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2011, Ukraine intended to make promotion of the rights of children one of its priorities for action and planned in particular to organise an international conference on protection of children against all forms of violence.

42. **Ms. Muhimpundu** (Burundi) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two optional protocols, as well as the related ILO conventions. Burundi had made the demobilisation of child soldiers and their reintegration into their families a priority and had built up a national strategy for rehabilitating persons affected by the conflict that had torn the country apart. Moreover, the country was currently re-examining the national policy for orphans and other vulnerable children, which had been in place for four years, and had set up a framework for dialogue with all stakeholders in the field of child protection. In respect of education, the primary school enrolment rate had increased from 36 per cent in 2005 to 92 per cent in 2010, thanks to the introduction of free schooling, and disparities between girls and boys in primary and secondary education had been reduced. A mobilisation campaign had also been launched to encourage parents to enrol their children in school without delay, and fees for birth registration had been discontinued. Health care was free from birth to five years of age and mosquito nets impregnated with insecticide were distributed to families. In respect of criminal matters, the Criminal Procedure Code, soon to be passed, contained child protection provisions. Finally, the Government had decided to tackle the relatively new problem of street children.

43. With a view to strengthening national policy on child protection, a department specialising in the defence of children's and families' rights would be created within the relevant ministry and a legal protection unit had been established within the Ministry of Justice, which was also setting up an inter-ministerial steering committee to draw up a child protection code.

44. **Ms. Djan** (Ghana) said that combating violence against children had been a priority for African States since the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had been introduced. Ghanaian public

policies and legislation on the rights of children were among the most progressive in Africa. Thus, the net school enrolment rate was one of the highest, at 89 per cent, and the infant mortality rate had dropped by 30 per cent, thanks to the development of health services. However, recent statistics revealed persistent difficulties: 28 per cent of the population still lived in poverty and the maternal mortality rate remained high.

45. Some measures had been taken in cooperation with various stakeholders to ensure promotion and protection of children's rights: for example, setting up local child protection committees throughout the country, introducing a school meals programme, building shelters for child victims of violence and trafficking, and setting up a service to assist victims of domestic violence. In partnership with UNICEF, the Ghanaian Government had introduced policies on, among other things, child health, education, early childhood development, social protection, combating child labour, child survival and development, combating exploitation of children and justice for minors.

46. Although the Ghanaian Government had adopted several draft laws on violence against children, some continued to fall victim to it. Society, and people's behaviour, would have to evolve and, with that end in view, it was urgent to raise public awareness and to encourage victims to file complaints.

47. Of course much remained to be done; in particular, adequate resources needed to be allocated to implement public policies, improve the health system in order to reduce the neonatal mortality rate and eradicate HIV/AIDS, and increase the completion rate in primary education. As the economic and financial crisis had worsened the living conditions of the poor, thus adversely affecting the capacities and resources of children's main caregivers, an effort was required from all the parties involved – development partners, organisations, administrations and civil society.

48. It was necessary to be aware of such interdependent relationships in order to provide States with the assistance required to combat violence against children and to promote their rights. In that respect, she wondered whether measures taken by the international community were able to protect children from violence.

49. **Mrs. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that child labour accounted for a major share of the working population in Haiti, owing to the limitations of school enrolment policies and especially the persistence of poverty, as children contributed to their families' subsistence, sometimes providing as much as 20 to 25% of the family income.

50. In Haiti, more than half the population was under the age of 21. Education was a key factor for children's future, especially after the earthquake that had damaged more than 80 per cent of schools in and around the capital. The Government was therefore giving priority to vocational training for young people, who were the principal victims of unemployment and social exclusion. It was also working to pacify the slums, particularly in the context of work carried out with young journalists by Plan, a non-governmental organisation.

51. In the framework of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, Haiti was focusing on three mechanisms for getting young people more involved socio-economic life: firstly, education for the poorest, secondly, participation in civic, social, economic and political life, and finally, action, by including them in the implementation of development projects.

52. Moreover, the Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti, launched in March 2010 after the earthquake of 12 January, ascribed particular importance to school meals for children. For the 2010/2011 school year, the goal was to extend the National School Canteens Programme to all children of school age, in conjunction with the World Food Programme.

53. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said he regretted that his country, where young people made up 45 per cent of the population, did not have an education system and social services that were sufficient to meet the demand. Furthermore, the lack of social, cultural and artistic forums was harmful to young people's development and could lead them to adopt risky behaviour. To remedy that problem, the Maldives, in partnership with UNICEF, had launched a national awareness-raising campaign on the prevention of drug addiction. The Government of the Maldives had also started to introduce its first technical cooperation project with the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime to combat drug addiction. Moreover, to combat violence against children, the Maldives had set up reception centres with staff trained by UNICEF. Nevertheless, much remained to be done in respect of

awareness-raising, prevention, treatment and judicial review.

54. In the face of such complex problems, a basic principle was clear: all sectors of society – decision-makers, teachers, guardians, health establishments, social institutions and the family – were actors in child protection and development. So they should be given the resources for introducing the preventive measures set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

55. The Maldives had acceded to the Convention in 1991 and to its optional protocols in 2002 and 2004 respectively. The country also supported the adoption of an additional optional protocol to provide a reporting mechanism so that children could file complaints and expose violations of their rights. In the absence of a national system, it was indeed essential to have an international remedy.

56. Climate change would also have harmful consequences for children. As the Maldives was one of the most vulnerable countries in that respect, it was feared that there would be an impact on children's fundamental rights, particularly their right to food. According to forecasts, climate change would exacerbate malnutrition; food security could be threatened by the combined effects of poor harvests, economic difficulties and an increase in fuel prices and, consequently, in food prices. Moreover, women and children made up 75 per cent of displaced persons following natural disasters.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) took the Chair.

57. **Mr. Chewang** (Bhutan) said that the issue of children's rights had been at the core of Bhutan's development efforts since the beginning of the sixties and that, after signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two optional protocols, Bhutan had adapted and supplemented its legislation in order to promote children's rights. For example, two draft laws on child protection and adoption were currently in the process of being adopted; Bhutan's Constitution guaranteed free primary and secondary education for all children of school age; and the Criminal Code and the Civil and Criminal Procedure Code set out procedures for cases involving children.

58. Bhutan had also made progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals. It had eliminated gender disparities in schooling; it was in the process of achieving goal 2 on universal primary education by 2015; and it had managed to reduce by almost two-thirds the mortality rate for children under the age of five (goal 4, target 5). As Bhutan had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Education was working on a project for integrating pupils with disabilities into schools and the Ministry of Health was focusing on the problems of drug addiction among young people. In respect of capacity-building and awareness-raising, the National Commission for Women and Children had organised several training courses on human rights for law enforcement officials, magistrates, members of parliament, local government representatives, the media and young people. Furthermore, various activities had been organized to raise awareness of children's rights and child protection among young people.

59. Despite the progress achieved, Bhutan still had difficulty in achieving its goals owing to a shortage of financial resources and other constraints, such as the rural exodus and the new expectations of the educated part of the population. Although it had been able to finance its national development policies itself, Bhutan would not have made so much progress without the help of its development partners, and it continued to count on their support.

60. **Mr. Zeidan** (Palestine) said he deplored the fact that all the Palestinian children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, were deprived of their fundamental rights, which were essential to their survival, welfare and development. For more than 40 years, Israel, the occupying Power, had been carrying out destructive policies and imposing a reign of psychological terror, depriving the children of any feeling of security. It was imprisoning and illegally detaining hundreds of children, indiscriminately attacking homes, schools, hospitals, places of worship and even United Nations buildings with sophisticated weapons, and using children as human shields, thereby flouting their most fundamental right, the right to life.

61. The Israeli attack on the occupied Gaza Strip between December 2008 and January 2009 had resulted in 350 deaths and 1,800 wounded among Palestinian children. His delegation also denounced the land, air and sea blockade that, for nearly two years, had been preventing essential infrastructure from being rebuilt and had caused a grave humanitarian crisis owing to the restriction on the movement of goods and

persons. Dozens of children had died for lack of medical treatment.

62. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupying forces were continuing, through demolition and eviction, to make Palestinian children homeless and to inflict severe trauma on them, depriving them even of their scarce playgrounds. In their everyday life, Palestinian children were also in danger of being the targets of humiliation and attacks by the occupying forces or by illegal settlers, who were heavily armed and enjoyed total impunity. In that regard, there was the example of two teenagers from Hebron who had been shot dead by a settler on the way to school in June 2010, and the more recent case of two others deliberately run over by a car driven by a settler in East Jerusalem.

63. In conclusion, the international community should take the necessary measures immediately to put an end to all the abuses committed by Israel and demand reparation for the crimes committed against the Palestinian civilian population, especially the children. Israel should put an end to the occupation and let the Palestinians exercise their inalienable rights, so that their children could grow up and live in peace and liberty in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

64. **Mr. Tanin** (Afghanistan) said that the Afghan Government, which was eager to promote and protect children's rights, in keeping with Afghan tradition, was faced with numerous difficulties after 30 years of war that had had terrible consequences for children. However, school enrolment rates had reached 71 per cent in 2010, with girls making up about 37 per cent of pupils, whereas they had not been allowed either to go to school or to work under the Taliban regime; and, in eight years, 4,500 new schools had been built. The country had thus come a long way in improving access to education and promoting parity at school.

65. Afghanistan was also striving to improve children's access to health care. Poliomyelitis had been practically eradicated and a vaccination campaign was in progress. Infant and child mortality rates had dropped considerably, but 50 per cent of children continued to suffer from underweight or malnutrition.

66. Unfortunately, children's rights were not recognised by all in Afghanistan. Hundreds of schools had been set on fire or destroyed by terrorist groups. The Taliban's strategy was to target pupils and teachers, particularly girls, or to recruit them to commit suicide attacks, in defiance of international rules. Afghanistan needed the help of the international community to maintain security, strengthen the rule of law and combat impunity. The Government intended to continue supporting the efforts of the United Nations to protect schools by declaring them peace zones, and to continue to protect the rights of children in pursuance of its Constitution and the international conventions and agreements to which it was a party. It had approved the creation of monitoring and reporting mechanisms and the appointment by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan of child protection officers, and had set up a committee to work in conjunction with the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting to draw up an action plan on the problems of children in armed conflict; furthermore, the Government had called upon civil society and religious leaders to combat sexual violence.

67. The efforts made by the Afghan Government for the benefit of children were an investment in the future and bore witness to its commitment to creating favourable conditions for them to thrive.

68. **Ms. Liphoto** (Lesotho) said that Lesotho had spared no effort in promoting and protecting children's rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was thus fully implemented in Lesotho and had been incorporated into domestic law. The Children's Protection Act of 1980, which dealt with justice for minors and set the age of majority at 18, gave precedence to restorative justice. It would soon be supplemented by a new text under review in Parliament that aimed to extend protection to orphans and other vulnerable children.

69. In 2003, the Government had adopted a law to combat sexual violence against children. It had set up a unit in every police station to review complaints and had established a telephone helpline. To help children who were orphans or who had to look after their families on account of HIV/AIDS, the Government was covering the costs of their schooling, paying them a monthly allowance and distributing food rations to them.

70. In respect of education, primary school enrolment and completion rates had improved greatly, thanks to the introduction of the free primary education programme in 2000. Lesotho had managed to exceed

the goal of parity in primary schools, with a rate of 82 per cent for girls and 75 per cent for boys. In 2010, the Government had adopted the law on free and compulsory primary education, and planned to extend free schooling to the secondary cycle.

71. Despite all those achievements, millions of children continued to suffer acts of extreme violence and to be exposed to trafficking, particularly as a result of poverty. Concerted efforts therefore had to be made to eradicate such scourges and to create a world fit for children.

72. **Ms. Mndebele** (Swaziland), recalling that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland guaranteed children the right to life, health, education and a decent standard of living, said that, in 2005, Swaziland had launched, in the framework of its decentralisation policy, an initiative entitled "Tinkhundla Fit For Children", which was inspired by the document "A world fit for children" and was intended to assist all children, including those who were orphaned or vulnerable, with the support of the local population and of extended families.

73. Swaziland, which recognised the right to education based on equality of opportunity and non-discrimination, was well on the way to achieving the goal of free primary education for all. Nevertheless, the dramatic increase in the number of orphans and of children in difficulty owing to poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic posed serious problems, which were exacerbated by the global financial, economic, food and energy crises, as well as by the effects of climate change. Increasing numbers of households were run by children. Faced with that situation, the Government had set up social centres to supply emergency food aid to orphans and vulnerable children, help them on a day-to-day basis, and enable them to be cared for in their communities of origin.

74. The Kingdom of Swaziland, which condemned and rejected all forms of child abuse, was currently updating and strengthening its legislation in order to punish anyone committing such acts. An initiative had been launched to raise public awareness of children's right to protection against all forms of abuse. Moreover, Swaziland was profoundly concerned by the extent of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings. Children, especially girls, were particularly vulnerable, and pornography was also spreading together with use of the Internet. The Kingdom of Swaziland vigorously condemned such criminal activities and was eagerly awaiting the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

75. The internationally agreed goals,, including the Millennium Development Goals, relating to children had to be achieved within the context of strengthened international cooperation and broader and more focused partnerships.

76. **Mrs. Lekaka** (Republic of the Congo) said that her country, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its additional protocols, had been sparing no effort to improve the situation of children since the end of the conflict. The Government's policy in that respect focused on health, basic education and social protection for the most vulnerable children. The Government had passed a law which defined the rights and duties of children and set out protective measures against violence, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation, including for particularly vulnerable children.

77. However, greater efforts needed to be made. Trafficking in human beings, particularly in children, was reaching alarming proportions in Central and West Africa. At Pointe-Noire, where such trafficking was thriving, an agreement between the Directorate-General for Social Affairs and the Family, UNICEF and the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, there had been further strengthening of measures adopted in the framework of an action plan implemented in 2007 to help children who were victims of trafficking to reintegrate into society.

78. At the regional and subregional levels, a campaign to combat child trafficking, supported by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), would be launched at Pointe-Noire. The Republic of the Congo was also participating, along with Benin, Togo and Gabon, in an initiative to reintegrate child victims of trafficking into society and had signed a multilateral agreement between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and ECCAS to combat trafficking in persons.

79. The obstacles encountered in that regard, in particular resistance from communities, the legal vacuum on the issue, and the difficulty of mobilising resources, were all factors that limited the action undertaken. It was essential for the international

community to show its determination to bring about a profound and lasting change in the situation.

80. **Mr. Ghufli** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country appreciated the efforts made by the United Nations and its specialised agencies on behalf of children and was determined to support them. The Emirates were striving to comply with national and international standards in order to improve children's survival, growth and protection, and had ratified or signed a number of international conventions to that effect.

81. Anxious to honour its obligations under the conventions, the United Arab Emirates had passed laws, particularly on combating trafficking in human beings and on the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as Act No. 28 of 2005 on the responsibilities of the family in child protection. Legislative texts were being drafted to protect all children's rights, create a place for children in national programmes, and allocate resources to specific projects.

82. The United Arab Emirates had also achieved major progress in respect of children's health and education. The primary school enrolment rate (for girls and boys) should reach 100 per cent within the next five years. The mortality rate for children under the age of five had dropped by 60 per cent and the infant mortality rate by 8.6 per 1,000 live births. The child vaccination rate for the first year of life was 94 per cent, and no cases of diphtheria or polio had been recorded since 1990.

83. As the right to education was a priority, the United Arab Emirates provided substantial aid to a considerable number of developing countries to enable them to provide basic education. In the framework of the Dubai Initiative, launched in 2007, school supplies had been distributed to four million children in 14 developing countries. The United Arab Emirates wished to recall the plight of the Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza, who were suffering from lack of food, care, medicines, housing and security, and they urged States to cooperate to improve their living conditions in accordance with the principles of human rights and with the relevant international resolutions.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.